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**Animal Identification and the Canadian Livestock Industry**

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**Introduction and Overview**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Canadian Cattle Identification Program.

The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) is a non-profit industry initiated and led organization incorporated to establish a National Individual Animal Traceback system for animal health and food safety in Canada. Initially, international events such as the outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease and BSE, the decrease in the numbers of identified cattle due to the eradication of Bovine Brucellosis and Tuberculosis, and our dependency on export markets increased the need to re-identify our cattle herd in Canada. As a result of the foresight and pro-active approach of our industry leaders and producers, Canada was prepared to react effectively and efficiently to the most unfortunate BSE animal health issue in 2003.

The system was designed to:

- increase consumer confidence through the assurance of efficient trace back and containment of animal health and food safety concerns
- increase market access by avoiding trade barriers and opening up new markets
- remain competitive with not only other species but other countries now focusing on developing ID and traceback programs.

The agency is led by a Board of Directors made up of representatives from all sectors of the livestock industry. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is one of our ex-officio representatives on our Board of Directors and has been an integral partner in the development and implementation of the program since its inception.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

CCIA, on behalf of the Canadian livestock industry, manages, administers and develops policy for the National ID, Tracking and Traceback program. This includes the allocation of a unique individual tag number from the national database which is required at the herd of origin and is maintained to the point of export or carcass inspection. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) provides full regulatory enforcement as defined under the ID regulatory authority within the Health of Animals Act. The CFIA also ensures that the National program meets the ever-evolving animal health and food safety traceback requirements from a domestic and international perspective. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) also works closely with the CCIA to ensure the funding requirements for important development and enhancement initiatives are met.

### **Achievements**

Implemented in 2001 for less than \$4M, with full enforcement phased in by July 1, 2002, the CCIA has been successfully established as a world leader in animal identification and traceback

With a proven successful industry/government partnership and a nation wide compliance rate of 97-100%, the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency implemented an industry sustainable program while still maintaining and surpassing National Standards. Within the system over 40 million unique numbers have been allocated and over 150 million transactions reported.

The CCIA houses the national ID and traceback systems for multi-species, including dairy, beef, bison, and sheep. In addition, the CCIA is developing the western slaughter database for swine and coordinating efforts with the Wisconsin Livestock ID Consortium.

By creating National Standards on individual identification, technology, tag distribution, data reporting and auditing and working directly with industry partners, the CCIA has implemented a system that is user-friendly, practical and fully supported by the Canadian cattle industry.

The CCIA continues to assist the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in any animal health or food safety related investigations in Canada, and was integral in the BSE investigations. We provided invaluable and timely tag inventory, tag history, retirement from the packing plants and activity of all herds involved. The international review committee was very complimentary of the Canadian traceback system.

### **Data Security**

All ID, traceback and tracking information associated with each tag number is securely maintained within the national database and is only accessed by authorized CFIA personnel in the event of an animal health issue. Additional information such as stray animal searches and value-added purposes is available only with prior producer consent. At the outset of the program, the CCIA

provided commitment to the cattle producers across Canada that their information within the database would be protected with the level of security, at a minimum, that our financial institutions have in place today.

### **Technology and Enhancements**

The CCIA is committed to continuing to enhance the program through various value added and Post BSE initiatives such as Age Verification and the transition to Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology. Age Verification is the association of animal birth date data with a unique Animal Identification Number. With the ever increasing demand from our international trading partners for accurate age determination in Canadian cattle, the CCIA implemented technological advancements to the national database that provides an effective and internationally recognized Validation and Age Verification Process. This program enables producers to submit information to a recognized national database and have it readily available should it be required by domestic or export markets.

The transition to Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology officially began on January 1, 2005. The previously used bar coded tags were no longer eligible for sale in Canada as of July 1, 2005 and the transition continues with all cattle leaving their farm of origin requiring a CCIA approved RFID tag as of September 1, 2006. RFID technology has many benefits including; allowing for optimal tag retention, providing accurate and efficient trace back information, allowing for the electronic reading of numbers without the previously required line of sight, ensuring Canada has an accurate and comprehensive Age Verification system, and proving the necessary basis for full animal movement tracking.

In conjunction with National Standards, the CCIA Standards for RFID tags ensures visual, mechanical, physical, electrical and environmental quality. The CCIA also verifies associated technology such as readers to ensure that they meet all standards for readability.

The CCIA continues to implement a highly integrated modular software application, designed to enhance the current system and provide the increasingly efficient platform to collect essential Animal Identification related data. This application includes the implementation of Age Verification and the transition to RFID as well as Premise Identification, Group Lot, Animal Sighting and Movement, Animal Health Zoning, Value-Added and Disaster Recovery.

### **Communications**

The CCIA National Communications Strategy is critical to the success of the program. Due to the limited resources of the National Agency the participation of all industry sectors, organizations and government is required to ensure our producers and industry partners are informed and support the basic program and future enhancements. Through various communications initiatives such as detailed brochures, advertisements, educational presentations, website

updates, posters and media kits, the CCIA effectively communicates key messages about the program.

### **The Future**

The CCIA is committed to continuing to meet and exceed domestic and international requirements for animal identification, tracking and traceability as well as improving our overall animal health emergency response capabilities. This includes moving toward full system compliance, continuing with all technological and database enhancements, while still ensuring a cost-effective, efficient and long term industry sustainable program. We will continue to work with our trading partners in an effort to achieve international standardization and increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of all livestock ID programs.

### **Conclusion**

The program was initially mandated as a joint venture between industry and the Federal government to meet the basic animal health and food safety traceback requirements and is now evolving as an efficient template for other value-added stakeholders. Canada will continue to work with industry and government partners domestically and internationally to expand and enhance the program, ensure long term sustainability and encourage harmonization.

On behalf of the Canadian livestock industry I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify before your Committee on Agriculture.